

Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project

Adaptive Management Oversight Committee

Standard Operating Procedure

*NOTE: To help achieve the **Purpose** of this SOP, a brief description (parenthetically in italics) is provided after each section heading to describe the intended content of that section.*

Title: *(Be concise and descriptive)* Purpose and Content of SOPs

Number: *(An original SOP is numbered X.0; successive revisions are numbered X-1, X-2, etc.)* 1.0

File Name: MW SOP 01.Purpose and Content of SOPs.Final.20050430.doc

Purpose: *(Briefly describe the purpose/objective of the SOP)* This SOP provides an overview of the intended purpose and content of the suite of SOPs that guide the Project.

Note: Although Project SOPs are developed with cooperation from the White Mountain Apache Tribe and the San Carlos Apache Tribe for the benefit of the overall Project, on tribal lands any Project activities are governed by tribal authorities, laws, rules, policies, etc. and Statements of Relationship between each tribe and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In other words, for wolf management on tribal lands, these SOPs will serve as background for discussions and decisions by the appropriate tribal authorities, and any IFT activities on tribal lands shall be conducted in full compliance with tribal decisions.

Exceptions: *(Describe any known exceptions to the SOP, and how and from whom dispensations will be requested and approved)* The purpose of an SOP is to standardize how a particular task, process, or situation is handled, to ensure compliance and consistency while still allowing sufficient flexibility to apply common sense and logic to meet immediate needs. Moreover, some future events or circumstances cannot be foreseen, so exceptions may be necessary. If, however, an SOP warrants foreseeable exceptions, the circumstances must be described in this section, and the approval process and authority must be described. However, if exceptions become the norm, the SOP must be revised. In any case, all exceptions must be appropriately documented (see SOP 2.0, Approval of SOPs).

Background: *(Brief background/justification on the significance/importance of the topic).* Standardization is important in any discipline, especially when consistency is needed to ensure compliance with law, policy, etc. SOPs help ensure that actions are conducted safely, under appropriate authority, and that data are collected and analyzed consistently. SOPs also provide for Project and individual accountability. The primary purpose of an SOP is to describe what to do and the order in which to do it, with pertinent background on why it must be done. Specific technical descriptions of how to do something can be included in an SOP, but the primary purpose of an SOP is not to teach someone how to do a particular technical task. An SOP is not a substitute for a training manual.

The USFWS is the lead federal agency for recovery of listed species under the Endangered Species Act. Mexican wolf reintroduction in the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BWRA) is part of the Gray Wolf Southwestern Distinct Population Segment recovery effort. The AGFD, NMDGF, USDA FS, USDA/APHIS WS, WMAT, and USFWS carry out the Reintroduction Project cooperatively,

pursuant to permits, Statements of Relationships, and/or cooperative agreements with USFWS, and regulations issued by USFWS and other federal, state, and tribal governments. These SOPs reflect and conform to those higher authorities, and guide Project cooperators and especially the IFT that works on the ground with agencies, landowners, the public, and the wolves.

Procedures: (*Step-wise processes to follow regarding the topic of interest.*)

1. Decide the focus of the SOP (a common error is to address too many issues in an SOP, or to try to write an SOP for every issue).
 - What related SOPs already exist? Review them.
 - Unless specifically necessary to do so, do not duplicate an existing SOP – instead, cite the relevant SOP(s) in the appropriate portion of the new SOP’s Procedure.
 - If, while reviewing an existing SOP, you think it needs to be revised to maximize the effectiveness of a new SOP, bring this to the attention of the responsible party (See SOP #2, Approval of SOPs).
 - Weigh the benefits of a comprehensive SOP versus several SOPs that break the topic into smaller, perhaps more manageable parts. The ultimate test to apply is, “Which approach will be easier to understand, and more efficient and effective for the end-user to apply?”
 - Refer back to the Purpose and Background statements often to keep focus.
2. Decide what writing approach is most appropriate to describe the Procedure.
 - A step-down outline is often best, as it describes, to the degree possible, the order in which tasks are completed. A new heading number or letter marks each step (or sub-step). This makes for easier reference within and between SOPs, assists the revision process, and is a more effective way to help the reader understand the procedure.
 - In some situations, a dichotomous key approach is more appropriate. A dichotomous key poses questions on the topic and the reader’s answer directs them to an appropriate section of the SOP or to the next question. This is often useful in SOPs with multiple options for handling a situation. For example, a capture procedure might employ a dichotomous key approach to determine the appropriate type of capture (net gun, dart gun, from helicopter, from ground, trapped, netted in pen, etc.).
 - Sometimes, a combination of a step-down outline and dichotomous key may be useful.
 - It is *ineffective and thus inappropriate* to simply write paragraph after paragraph of narrative. A narrative approach is more difficult to follow, and counter to the purpose of an SOP: to provide concise, clear guidance that is easy to read and easy to apply correctly.

3. Describe the Procedure concisely but with sufficient detail to ensure clear understanding and correct application.
 - This is the “art” of SOP writing: balancing general guidance with specific instructions. Decide the key attributes of the SOP to which people following it must adhere, and which specific tasks may be done in more than one way.
 - For example, this SOP requires that an author of an SOP adopt a specific writing approach (step-wise progression or dichotomous key), but it does not dictate which approach to use. The preference for a step-wise approach is clearly noted, but an option (dichotomous key) is presented. Finally, an approach that is not acceptable (lengthy narrative paragraphs) is also identified.
 - Another example might be that several techniques are available to capture wolves in a pen: using a salmon net, pining or using a snatch pole in a den box or under a tree, and darting are all options to capture wolves. It is clear to anyone who has captured of wolves in a pen that the situation and the individual wolf will dictate which technique is “best.” Therefore, it would be senseless to write an SOP that required any one technique. Instead, an appropriate SOP would focus on a step-wise list of priorities, based on appropriate questions or criteria. For example, the first question might be, “Does the wolf regularly use its den box?” If so, subduing the wolf in the den box is the best capture technique. In contrast, if the wolf runs a lot, rather than takes refuge in its den box, we might want to ensure that our “human capture line” is tight, and we corner and net the animal.
4. If the Procedure describes a process that involves data collection, or other documentation specific to the SOP, a blank datasheet should be included as an Appendix to the SOP.
 - Make sure the SOP includes clear instructions related to completion and handling of the data form and the data, including:
 - When and where to complete the form -- At the site, back at the office, etc.
 - What to do with the form when completed – copies to make, distribution, filing, etc.
 - Data entry instructions – what database is used and where it is located, data entry conventions, procedures and responsibilities for quality controlling the database (checking for errors), etc.

Approval: The Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Adaptive Management Oversight Committee approved this SOP on November 18, 2004.

References: None

Appendixes: None